

Excerpt from The Facts in the Case of Edgar Allan Poe

By

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Based on Letters, Poems, and Stories from E.A. Poe

NOT FOR DUPLICATION

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ACT 1Scene 1:

Lights up on a multi-level set. The room should look like a medical examiner room in the early 1900's. A place where doctors could watch as operations and surgery was performed. There are chairs positioned on the set where the colleagues are seated. Responses are to given straight to the audience as if they are being questioned or interrogated. Individuals are labeled as a-g because they are not specific people and/or characters.

A:

Did I know him? Yes, of course. He was a colleague of mine, but by me being here I assume you already knew that, no I have not spoken to nor seen him for many years.

B:

Vanished? That is not possible, he never strayed far from Virginia, have you to spoken to her or to Mrs. Clemm/
(pause) Oh I was unaware, he never mentioned that.

C:

He spent some years in the military have you checked their records perhaps that is where he has been?

D:

His relatives? Obviously detective you know very little of the man you are looking for. His mother Elizabeth

E:

Died of Tuberculosis in 1811

D:

His father David

F:

Abandoned him, his older brother, and younger sister when their mother died and was never heard from again.

G:

The Allans? Yes he was taken in by them in is youth but do not look for resolution there detective; that relationship, if it was one at all was fraught with bitterness and malcontent. John died in 1834 leaving him nothing in his will; that path is a dead end and will yield no answers for you.

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A:

The last time I saw him? Well, that is really where we should begin is it not?

B:

It was spring and I was attending a lecture at the University of Virginia. Edgar was speaking on the nature of the human soul and my studies of the human psychosis had prompted me to attend. I had not seen him since we attended school there together and was looking forward to renewing our old acquaintance.

C:

His lecture was a culmination of years spent in the asylums and mad houses of the world. He sought to understand the nature of the soul and the effect that it had on what he termed "The Human Condition". They were controversial ideas, even for that time, which meant that we were all flocking to hear them; but that is how Edgar was and that is how he was perceived.

D:

Do I believe in the human soul? Do I believe that it has the ability to be corrupted? Well I do not pretend to be an expert on these questions; however, I can tell you some of what Edgar said for these were truly his passions and torments even to the point of what some would consider insanity.

E:

No, Edgar would say that insanity does not exist but in fact these dark urges of mankind result from what he term as "The Imp of the Perverse". That was the title of his lecture that day and I came as did many to hear his thoughts on this newly found idea of perverseness. He began with a simple question that had the gravest of implications:

POE:

If we cannot comprehend God in his visible works, how then in his inconceivable thoughts, that call the works into being? If we cannot understand him in his objective creatures, how then in his substantive moods and phases of creation?

F:

Edgar, how can we suppose what it is that God thinks or the motives or objectives of God. Can man understand such things and is it not heresy to suppose that the average man can do so?

POE:

No one who trustingly consults and thoroughly questions his own soul, will be disposed to deny the radicalness in

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POE: (cont'd)

question. There lives no man who at some period has not been tormented, for example, by an earnest desire to tantalize a listener. The speaker is aware that he displeases; he has every intention to please, he is usually curt, precise, and clear, the most laconic and luminous language is struggling for utterance upon his tongue, it is only with difficulty that he restrains himself from giving it flow; he dreads and deprecates the anger of him whom he addresses; yet, the thought strikes him, that by certain involutions and parentheses this anger may be engendered. That single thought is enough. The impulse increases to a wish, the wish to a desire, the desire to an uncontrollable longing, and the longing is indulged.

G:

Yes, this is the nature of the perverseness that you have spoken of before; but are you suggesting therefore that every man is subject to this desire to torture, this desire to elongate suffering, this desire to hold dominance over another human being?

POE:

I suggest that we have a task before us which must be speedily performed. We stand upon the brink of precipice. We peer into the abyss—we grow sick and dizzy. And because our reason violently deters us from the brink, the more we impetuously approach it. There is no passion in nature so demoniacally impatient as he whom stands, shuddering upon the edge of a precipice, thus meditates a Plunge. To indulge, for a moment, in any attempt at thought, is to be inevitably lost. If there be no friendly arm to check us, or if we fail in a sudden effort to steer ourselves backward from the abyss, we plunge, and are destroyed.

A:

You have lost me in your maze of reasoning Edgar, you speak of the abyss, you speak of passion to throw ourselves into some chaotic sense of violence. However, in your rhetoric I have lost your purpose in these thoughts.

POE:

I have said thus much to present to you the mere idea of the line that each of us walks in our daily occurrences. How with a single step we find ourselves ever closer to the perverseness of soul that I have spoken of. I have seen many unaccounted victims of the Imp of the Perverse and I can assure you gentleman that our studies into the human mind will at some point come into contact with this. What we label as insanity is inherit in all of us and as we strive to combat it, it pulls us further and further to the edge of the abyss.

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B:

But the proof! This is nothing more than wild speculation on ideals and philosophy. There is no record no fact involved here. How do we hold society accountable for their actions; how do we explain the malicious and obscene acts that man does without a scientific explanation?

POE:

Gentlemen, colleagues, you ask me to justify the existence of the human soul. I have seen the madness and the corruption of this society. It is not some concrete form that you can extract or purify but only one that can be observed and helplessly watched as it is corrupted. You ask me how do we hold society accountable for human nature; I ask how do we hold God accountable for human nature?

The following should be said on top of each other in variance

D:

Blasphemy

E:

Heresy

F:

Madness

C:

Your theories are dangerous Edgar, they question too much. Who in their right mind questions the accountability of God with no sense of remorse? I think we have heard enough of these wild speculations.

D:

You speak as if we are beasts acting on pure instinct and unable to channel aggression and violence with reason.

POE:

Gentlemen you misunderstand my theories-

E:

No sir you seem to misunderstand the purpose of our profession. We are doctors, physicians, lawyers; we seek to help and heal not to produce outlandish and unorthodox concepts. What good will these do in the face of those who need our help? What good will talk of perverseness and soul do in the halls of the asylum? Nothing! They will fade and be carried out with those that perish alone in their cells. We need action Edgar not philosophy.

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POE:

I do not know the course of action that we should take here gentlemen. I do not presume to know the answers to all the questions. I simply bring what I have observed, what I have recorded in my years of study. Do with it as you will. The nature of science is to ask questions; where do we stand when you refuse to ask them.

F:

Thank you for your time Edgar, your lecture was in a word[U+0085]..interesting.

Scene: 2

Black out except for a single light
on Maillard

MAILLARD:

My name? Of course. My name is Monsieur Maillard and I have a special invested interest in this case. You see you wish to know where Mr. Poe has been for the last three years; perhaps my testimony can shed some much needed light on your case. I encountered Edgar at his lecture at the University of Virginia to which no doubt you have already heard. You see I myself had encountered this perverseness and had sought him out to ask a few burning questions.

Entering into the scene

Mr. Poe may I have a moment of your time.

POE:

Well it seems as if you are the only one who wishes to possess it? What can I do for you mister...

MAILLARD:

Maillard

POE:

Maillard....that is French; is it not?

MAILLARD:

It is; but I have lived here enough years not to be. I found your theories intriguing; tell me have you heard of the Maison de Santé.

POE:

I have not

MAILLARD:

In the southern Provinces of France there is a chateau, much dilapidated in appearance and shrouded by dense forest that lies by the foundations of the mountains. An overgrown road of grass masks its path from the outside world.

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POE:

You speak of dreams? And the interest to me?

MAILLARD:

Do you truly believe in the soul?

POE:

More than anything I know.

MAILLARD:

Your colleagues demanded proof, they demanded concrete evidence. How far would you be willing to go to obtain that which they seek?

POE:

As you heard Mr. Maillard, I do not think we can achieve concreteness on an abstract form; it does not exist.

MAILLARD:

Perhaps not, but you cannot tell me that your confidence in your theories was not shaken by that barrage of objections. What I offer is reassurance in your theories.

POE:

And this place, this Maison de Santé, holds that reassurance?

MAILLARD:

In a manner of speaking; yes.

POE:

What is it exactly, a hospital of some sort?

MAILLARD:

More like a sanctuary, Mr. Poe, a safe guard from the outside world.

POE:

I have seen enough of the world to know what it is that you speak of Maillard, you can disguise it by abstract names but an asylum for all its pleasantries is still an asylum and I have spent enough time away from the comforts of my home.

MAILLARD:

And you Mr. Poe, for all your hesitations are still curious. And as to the comforts of your home; will they still not be there when you return.

POE:

But I have traveled the world and spent time in numerous "sanctuaries" as you call them; why would this be any different.

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MAILLARD:

There are no bars, no fetters of any kind, and no cells to hold the inmates. No iron clad doors or guards with chains to watch their escape; but they remain.

POE:

That is not possible; it stands against ethics and reason that they should be left unkept.

MAILLARD:

Yet they are.

POE:

They? What is their diagnosis?

MAILLARD:

Perverseness Mr. Poe...Perverseness. You speak of the moment where we stand on the abyss. The moment where we choose to leap into the unknown. They will recount the moment they leaped from the cliff and landed in midst of insanity. Their crimes are unspeakable, yet they relieve them day after day; week after week.

POE:

And how is it that they have come there?

MAILLARD:

Of that I can only say a little. I was first drawn there by a Doctor Tarr over five years ago when he would write to me memoirs of the five inmates that he had collected from all areas across the world. He said they shared a connection that he had never seen and in his chateau they each played their parts, their roles in reliving their crimes. Of the estate itself you will find no record and it is best that it should be kept so.

POE:

You left such a place? Why?

MAILLARD:

You know full well what the insane can do to sane mind. There are limits to even the strongest of minds; I trust you will remember that.

POE:

And what of this Doctor Tarr?

MAILLARD:

I have not heard from him for many months

POE:

You intrigue me sir, as does your tale; however I trust that I will not be traveling to France anytime soon. I have

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POE: (cont'd)

promised my wife that we should take some time off from our travels as she has become all too anxious in such a lifestyle.

MAILLARD:

I was unaware that you were married; her name?

POE:

Virginia

MAILLARD:

Well...we must take care of those things that are most precious to us. Farewell Mr. Poe, should you wish to; what was it? Ah yes...Should you once again begin to ask questions, as you so delicately put it; you may find me at this address.